

T H E

L O U N G E R.

[N^o XXI.]

Saturday, June 25. 1785.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

S I R,

London, 1785.

I Propose by this letter, to give you the history of a few particulars in a life of too little consequence to be worthy the attention of the public, were it not that it may possibly afford some useful materials for instruction.

My father was the descendant of an ancient family in the county of — in Scotland, possessed only of a moderate fortune. His ancestors had uniformly lived in the country, except occasionally for a few months in the winter; and he himself would probably have observed the same plan, had it not been for the following occurrence.

The county where his estate lay had long been divided into two parties, who had tried to get the political direction of it. They came at length to be tired of the trouble and expence to which this contest put them; and a connection which happened to be formed by the heads of both sides with the minister at the time, was an additional inducement to drop it.

In this situation the election of a member of parliament happened to come on; but as the chiefs of neither party, though their hostilities had ceased, inclined to pay the other the compliment of electing a person who was keenly attached to it, my father was fixed upon as a person who was generally beloved, and disagreeable to no body.

Though becoming a member of parliament was certainly a hazardous step, considering the smallness of my father's fortune; yet his vanity could not resist the temptation. To parliament accordingly he went; where, after some years attendance, as he attached himself closely to the minister, was a sure vote, and was not without some talents for business, he arrived at the height of his wishes, and obtained a considerable post for life.

This change in his situation made him form new plans and new views for his family.

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It

It was now resolved, that the place of our residence should be changed, and that for the future it should be settled in London. Accordingly, he and his two daughters, of whom the writer of this letter is one, (our mother had died some time before), removed from Scotland, and took up their abode in the capital.

I was fourteen years of age, and my sister Harriet eleven, when this material change in our situation took place.—I shall not easily forget the giddy joy I felt, when the plan was first proposed; nor the expectations with which my heart beat when the measure was resolved on.

Upon our arrival in town, my father's affection for his daughters, not to say his vanity, which led him to think that nothing was too high for them, made him spare no expence, to get us instructed in every fashionable accomplishment. No attention was neglected, to bestow upon us every qualification which the best masters, and an introduction into the best company, could produce.

Though my father's revenue was now considerable, yet the expence of having a family in London went far beyond his income. The distresses which this occasioned (as is commonly the case with such distresses) were felt long before they were endeavoured to be remedied; at last, however, they became so urgent, as to oblige my father to think of retrenching his expences, by returning for a while to the country.

Thither accordingly we repaired. I will not trouble you with giving a comparison of the different sensations I felt when I first left the country, with those which I entertained on my return. Suffice it to say, that we were received with the utmost respect and attention. My father's situation, and his general popularity, were sufficient to secure this; and our conduct was certainly such as not to give offence.

My father was now advanced in years. Notwithstanding the emoluments of his office, he found his fortune not increasing, and he became anxious to have my sister and me settled in the world. No opportunity of this kind however occurred. The gentlemen of our part of the country, though they treated us with respect, never thought of us for wives. A London, a fashionable, and showy education, they considered as incompatible with their plans and views of life. They married girls like themselves, whose habits were like their own.

After having somewhat repaired the waste of London by the economy of the country, we returned once more to the metropolis. By the greatest accident in the world, my sister Harriet happened to catch the fancy of a young nobleman of fashion and address.

Dining

Dining one day with a group of his companions, he gave Harriet G—— for his toast,—swearing a great oath,—she was the finest girl in the world—"I have a great mind," said he, "to marry her."—He was as good as his word, and their marriage soon after followed.

A marriage of this kind, made with levity, and entered upon without affection, had little chance to be a happy one. Harriet's husband soon not only became indifferent, but was not even at pains to conceal his indifference. His amusements lay in hunting, in drinking, in cock-fighting, in gaming;—all her accomplishments, her music, her knowledge in modern languages, her taste in dress, her skill in painting, &c. went for nothing. This negligence for a while sunk deep into her heart; it threw her into melancholy, and I was apprehensive of the consequences of it to her health. In time, however, her spirits revived, and she became as indifferent about her husband as he was about her. She even went the length of wishing to show him marks of her indifference.

In this situation they now are: more than indifferent, they hate one another; and their only pleasure consists, though they do it with the most finished good-breeding, in giving mutual vexation: He never at home, she always abroad;—he extravagant in his pleasures, she no less so in hers;—he in one gaming party, she in another.

You will naturally, Sir, wish to know what is my situation. I can assure you it is by no means agreeable. My father has been for some time dead. He died without leaving a shilling, his debts being fully equal to his estate. In these circumstances, it becomes a matter of necessity, not of choice, that I should live with my sister; but from what I have already said, you must easily see my residence in her family cannot be desirable. The bad terms in which my sister and her Lord live, make me neither loved nor trusted by either. The husband is jealous that I possess the confidence of his Lady, and know more than I should know; she again thinks me a spy upon her enjoyments, and is displeased that I should disapprove of that dissipation to which she has so entirely devoted herself.

A thousand times have I wished to leave this house, where no prospect of enjoyment for me now remains; but as often have I found every such scheme impracticable. My relations in the country have now forgotten me; and even if they remembered me with more interest than I am afraid they do, would not willingly receive into their family one whom they naturally think a fashionable residence in London must have so much spoiled. I have frequently thought of hiring a small house, and living by myself,
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but I find I am unable to afford it. In this state, I must remain where I am, neglected by the Earl of —, and not trusted by the Countess. My situation I have often thought worse than that of their housekeeper; for while she receives their wages, she has it in her power to leave them whenever she has a mind.

With what bitter reflections do I now recollect the time when I first left the country! How different has been the fate of Lucy R—— from mine! She was the early companion of my youth. She married, when she was young, a gentleman without fortune, but possessed of every good quality. Though the friends of both sides considered the match as imprudent, they yielded to the inclination of the parties. It certainly was not a marriage either of interest or ambition; but it was a marriage of choice, of affection. Heaven has rewarded it.—The very narrowness of their circumstances, the mutual inconveniencies, the hardships they had to undergo, but endeared them the more to each other. These were an additional incitement to the industry of Lucy's husband, and contributed to the prosperous situation at which he has now arrived. I received lately a letter from Lucy, giving me an account of her situation, which, though expressed in the simplest terms, went to my heart. "How happy am I," says she; "the greatest part of my happiness consists in my having added to the comfort of my dear Charles. It was but yesterday he told me, that but for me he would have sunk under the difficulties of life, but for me he would not have been able to bear up against them; but with you," said he,—"It is needless to add the remainder of his affectionate address."

Such is the letter of Lucy R——. I shall not trouble you with any remarks on the difference of her situation and mine.—The quiet ordinary path is the road to real and lasting enjoyment; and if parents wish to make their children happy, they should educate them for that station in which fortune has placed them; they should know that, for one of my sex at least, there is more chance of felicity in the private stations of life, than in all the noise, and pomp, and show of a more exalted situation.

I am, &c.

A. G.

E D I N B U R G H :

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